U.S. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

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Acting Comptroller General
of the United States

Accessible Version

August 4, 2026

The Honorable Russell T. Vought
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20503

Priority Open Recommendations: Office of Management and Budget

Dear Director Vought:

The purpose of this letter is to call your personal attention to three areas where open recommendations to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) should be given high priority.

In January 2026, we reported that, on a government-wide basis, 77 percent of our recommendations made 5 years ago were implemented.[1] OMB's recommendation implementation rate was 50 percent. As of June 2026, OMB has 176 open recommendations, including 20 priority recommendations.[2] Since our August 2024 letter, OMB implemented 11 priority recommendations.[3] I appreciate OMB's continued commitment to addressing our recommendations, which will better position OMB to more effectively and efficiently achieve its mission.

We are highlighting the following areas that warrant your timely and focused attention:

- **Combatting federal fraud.** The federal government loses an estimated $233 billion to $521 billion annually to fraud. Targeted fraud estimates can provide information about the scope of the problem in different program areas, help prioritize resources, and demonstrate return on investment from fraud prevention and detection efforts. However, the federal government faces challenges in producing more precise fraud estimates or more granular estimates at the program level, including from incomplete and varyingly recorded data on identified fraud. We recommended that OMB work with federal agencies and Offices of Inspector General to develop guidance on the collection of executive agency data to support fraud estimation. Doing so would aid ongoing federal efforts to combat fraud.
- **Reducing improper payments.** Since fiscal year 2003, cumulative estimates of improper payments—payments that should not have been made or that were made in an incorrect

[1]GAO, *Performance and Accountability Report, Fiscal Year 2025*, GAO-26-900644 (Washington, D.C.: Jan. 29, 2026).

[2]GAO considers a recommendation to be a priority if when implemented, it may significantly improve government operations, for example, by realizing large dollar savings; eliminating mismanagement, fraud, and abuse; or making progress toward addressing a high-risk or duplication issue.

[3]GAO, *Priority Open Recommendations: Office of Management and Budget*. GAO-24-107364 (Washington, D.C.: Aug. 9, 2024). In this letter, we identified 37 priority recommendations. Since then, in addition to the 11 recommendations that were implemented, the priority status was removed from five recommendations, eight were closed as no longer valid, and we added seven new priority recommendations.

amount—have totaled about $3 trillion, including about $186 billion for fiscal year 2025. We have emphasized the importance of preventive controls in mitigating improper payments and fraud risk. For example, agencies can leverage Treasury's Do Not Pay system to conduct data matching to prevent payments to ineligible recipients. In May 2025, we issued an updated *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, which includes an emphasis on prioritizing preventive control activities. We also recommended OMB develop and implement monitoring mechanisms—such as goals, benchmarks, and performance measures—to evaluate agency use of the Do Not Pay system. Effective monitoring mechanisms and reliable and complete data, such as improper payments prevented, could enhance OMB's ability to evaluate agencies' use of the system and remediate any issues identified, ultimately helping OMB to ensure accountability in federal spending.

- **Fully developing a federal program inventory.** Each year, the federal government spends trillions of dollars on federal programs that support the American people and address policy goals. Statutory provisions first enacted in 2011 require OMB to develop and annually update an inventory of all federal programs. However, the federal program inventory website that OMB last updated in January 2025 does not include all federal programs or provide all required information. In September 2024, we recommended that OMB (1) articulate plans for fully implementing a comprehensive inventory and (2) establish a data governance structure to manage the inventory and ensure it provides useful information. Without a complete inventory that provides useful funding and performance information, decision-makers lack a critical tool to help them better identify and manage fragmentation, overlap, and duplication across the federal government.

Two of these areas—combatting federal fraud and reducing improper payments—are included as areas critical to better managing the cost of government in GAO's High Risk List.[4] Several other government-wide, high risk areas also have direct implications for OMB and its operations, including improving IT acquisitions and management. We also ask that OMB continue its efforts to improve federal financial management, as much work remains. In particular, the processes used to prepare the consolidated financial statements and the Department of Defense's financial management are long-standing impediments that we believe could benefit from additional focus from OMB.

A comprehensive list of open recommendations, including new priority recommendations, and information about their status can be found on the GAO website at Recommendations Database | U.S. GAO. Copies of this letter are being sent to the appropriate congressional committees.[5] This letter will also be available at Priority Recommendations | U.S. GAO.

We would welcome an opportunity to discuss how to address our open recommendations as we pursue the shared goal of working to increase efficiency and effectiveness of government programs and spending. Please do not hesitate to contact me or Cardell Johnson, Managing Director, Strategic Issues Team at JohnsonCD1@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of

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[4]This list identifies government operations with greater vulnerabilities to fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement. GAO, *High-Risk Series: Heightened Attention Could Save Billions More and Improve Government Efficiency and Effectiveness*, GAO-25-107743 (Washington, D.C.: February 25, 2025).

[5]We also help Congress identify congressional oversight actions that can help agencies implement priority recommendations, such as incorporating them into legislation. James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023, Pub. L. No. 117-263, § 7211(a)(2),136 Stat. 2395, 3668 (2022) (codified at 31 U.S.C. § 719 note). Congress can also use its budget, appropriations, and oversight processes to incentivize executive branch agencies to act on our recommendations and monitor their progress. For example, Congress can hold hearings focused on agencies' progress in implementing priority recommendations, withhold funds when appropriate, or take other actions to provide incentives for agencies to act.

Congressional Relations and Media Relations may be found on the last page of this letter. Thank you for your personal attention to these important issues.

Sincerely,

//SIGNED//

Orice Williams Brown
Acting Comptroller General
of the United States

cc: The Honorable Eric M. Ueland, Deputy Director for Management, OMB
The Honorable Scott K.H. Bessent, Secretary, Treasury
The Honorable Kevin R. Rhodes, Administrator, OFPP, OMB
Mr. Gregory J. Barbaccia, Federal CIO, OMB
Mr. Gary Grippo, Acting Fiscal Assistant Secretary, Treasury
Mr. Joseph Gioeli, Acting Commissioner, Bureau of the Fiscal Service, Treasury